

## Falling by Evandar

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**Summary:**

When Georgie tells him about meeting the clown in the sewer, Bill starts to remember their encounter the year before.

# 1. Reunion

## Author's Note:

Oops, I continued it.

Probably very slow-updating.

He'd forgotten. He'd forgotten about the clown, about what really happened to Bowers, Belch, and Criss. He'd forgotten about the sewers and the scar that's still on his arm, about the smell of blood and grey water, about the shape in the dark that riffled through his thoughts and promised not to eat him. He'd forgotten, but he hadn't at the same time. He'd dreamed of mad, piping music and dancing lights. He'd dreamed of a voice that echoed in his mind and made his ears bleed onto his pillowcase.

He didn't realise that it was all connected until Georgie told him about the clown in the sewer, until he'd heard the invitation. He didn't realise that he was *going* to visit until his feet brought him here, to where the sewers pour out into the Kenduskeag. He stares into the dark, filthy water washing over his shoes, and tries not to breathe too deeply. He can remember, now, the twists and turns that will take him to the clown's lair - *a left, a downward slope, two rights, a left, and two more rights* - and the tower of trash and the dark, musty sanctuary of the trailer at its base. His hands are shaking. His heart is in his throat. He's already walking into the dank, stinking darkness.

It's been raining recently. The water is up to his knees, and it sinks cold into his jeans, weighing his steps and filling his shoes. He doesn't stop walking.

"H-he th-thrusts his fists," he whispers, "against the p-p-posts, a-and s-suh-still insuh-sists h-he suh-suh-hees th-the g-g-ghosts."

Ghosts. There are ghosts here, now, in the sewer. (There always were.) On the edge of his hearing, he can hear Bowers and his gang. Their shouts and their laughter. Hyena-humour.

He still doesn't know what the clown is. Not human, certainly – not

anything like human. But he does know that this is dangerous, probably stupid. Just because he survived the first time, it doesn't mean that he'll live through a second meeting. He can remember, now, the blood spiralling through the water, the crunch-snap of Bowers' fingers, and the eerie smile painted red with gore. (His mind still shies away from the spider-creature it had unfolded into once back in its trailer.) The clown killed them. It *ate* them. It let Bill go because he'd led them there and made them into an offering.

None of that matters. He still wants to see it. He *needs* to see it.

He edges down the slope, keeping his balance with one hand on the sewer wall. He turns right and right again, left, and right, and right, and the sewer opens up in front of him. The tower of junk looms; at its base, Bowers' knife still sticks out of an abandoned teddy bear; at its summit, a body floats. What's left of one: it's missing limbs.

But there's a bigger problem than the dead body. That, at least, doesn't seem quite real from where Bill's standing: the missing parts have turned it into some kind of abstract.

The problem is, Bill's alone.

The prickling sensation that he remembers from last time is absent. Bill walks around the tower, sloshing through the filthy water, but aside from the corpse over his head and the tower of junk, there's no sign of the clown at all. Nothing. The sense of being watched is gone; there's no pressure in his skull as it pushes in on his mind. He heads towards the trailer but pauses.

He knows, with a sinking finality, that it isn't in there, either.

He leaves. He's disappointed and relieved all at once, but by the time he's stepped blinking into the sunlight – soaking wet and stinking – the disappointment has won.

(He remembers the weight of a hand on his shoulder and the sharp slice of a barbed leg into his back.)

He cycles back home, makes up a story about falling into the Kenduskeag when his mother wrinkles her nose at the smell and the

state of his clothes. He showers and, curious, when he's done he turns his back to the mirror and peers at himself over his shoulder. He leans back, twisting and shifting until the silvery line of a healed scar catches the light. It's small, a fine line that runs parallel to his spine, just under the sharp wing of his left shoulder blade.

His heart pounds in his chest. After everything, he can't quite believe that the scar is actually there; he twists his arm behind his back to touch it, and gives a soft, shuddering breath when he feels the slight ridge of raised skin. It's real. He's *glad* it's real, awful as it is.

...

*Betty Ripsom is reported missing.*

...

It's the prickling sensation of being watched that wakes him. Bill's eyes snap open, and at first he doesn't see anything except the usual shadows on his bedroom wall. He sees nothing, right up until something cold and thick drips on his face. He grimaces, looking up at the ceiling only to find two pin-pricks of blue light hanging over him. He jerks back, flails. His heart is pounding right up in his throat and his instinctive scream comes out more as a choked squeak.

The clown giggles, high and wicked. Fear slides like ice down his spine even as he struggles to get his breathing under control. He reaches up to brush – drool? Cold blood? – off his cheek and his fingertips brush against faded pompoms. The clown hasn't pulled away at all during his struggles. It's looming over him, too close in the dark, and Bill can feel the weight of it pushing the mattress down on either side of his hips.

He's not scared, not anymore, but his heart is still racing.

"H-hi," he whispers.

"Hiya Billy."

The reply is soft, spoken in that same high, lilting voice that Bill remembers finding so odd the first time he heard it. The clown's breath is cool on his face, rank with the copper stench of blood. Bill

recoils instinctively; something cold drips onto his face again, sliding wet from the corner of his mouth across his cheek. He has no idea if it's blood or drool, and when he licks his lips, the taste doesn't leave him any wiser. What it *does* do is send another shiver down his spine when he realises what he's done.

The clown titters. It shifts, looms closer; the glow of its eyes blue and eerie, and Bill – staring up at them – can see the same lights that he sees in his dreams sometimes, flickering and dancing behind the clown's irises.

(There's a flash of something in the back of his mind, a thought that isn't his own: dark, ovoid pillars bathed in dancing light; loneliness and *hunger*; a vast shape that could be a turtle in the same way the clown is not really a spider, stars and gas spewing from its gaping maw. They are things he has seen before in half-remembered dreams: death and life and destruction and...)

(Oh.)

He pushes himself up, half-sitting. He can feel his heart still racing, and there's a squirming in his belly that has nothing to do with the reek of the clown's breath.

He's only ever kissed Beverly Marsh: a tiny peck in a school play. Other than that, he's only seen them in movies, or in glimpses snatched of older teens or his parents. They always seemed less wet than this; less filled with teeth and the taste of gore. A whine slips from his throat and he presses deeper into it, his lips parting under the pressure. The clown's thick lower lip presses against his teeth and he bites. He feels the answering growl down to his core.

It's only when the clown pulls away that he realises that he's crying; that his cock is aching hard in his pyjamas, and that a long, clawed hand is gripping hard at his shoulder. He stumbles over alien syllables – the name he knows from his dreams, but that he couldn't have said even without the stammer – and a giggle slips into the gap between them.

“Oh, you can call me Pennywise,” it says. “Pennywise the Dancing Clown.”

## 2. Tempo

### Notes for the Chapter:

Second chapters are hard, guys. *But*. The sheer thirst in the comments is pretty inspiring.

I'm trying to make sure I update relatively regularly. Since I'm working full time and doing a PhD, I figured every couple of weeks wouldn't be unreasonable.

Bill has always known things he shouldn't. He knows about the affair his father had before Georgie was born. He knows about the refrigerator unit in the junk yard - the one that Patrick Hockstetter filled with the bodies of animals, skinned and dismembered. He knows about the things that Richie and Eddie do when they slope off together, the nervous kisses and exploring hands. It's something he's always done: looked at people and *known*.

He knows other things now, too.

There's an awareness now that hadn't been there before. The day he'd woken up with blood and saliva smeared across his mouth, he'd started to see things that he had never been able to before: ghosts flickering at the edges of his vision; buildings restored to former glory when they had been crumbling the day before; he can feel Pennywise's consciousness sliding across his own. He knows the taste of human blood and the feeling of sharp teeth against his tongue.

He rests his head against the cool surface of his desk and closes his eyes.

His dreams these days are filled with dancing light and strange shadows that shift and change in time with piping music. He knows that it's connected to Pennywise and its visits at night, to the kisses they share in the dark, but he doesn't know *how* - not exactly. He knows that he's been told, but the memories of what was said are just out of reach. He's so *close*, and he *tries*, but...

"Mr Denbrough!"

He jerks up, blinking rapidly as his classmates giggle. "Ss-ss-suh-soh-rry," he says, but Mr Hannigan is already turning away. Even so, Bill catches the roll of his eyes, and he grits his teeth as his cheeks burn.

As tired as the dreams and the night-time visits are leaving him, he misses Pennywise during the day. He misses the lack of mockery. He misses being taken seriously and listened to, no matter how much he stumbles over words and sentences. He's started to realise, even, that he's stammering less and less around Pennywise. That being listened to is *helping*.

He balances his chin in his hand and looks down at his notes, scrawled and almost incomprehensible. He sighs. He lets his eyes drift closed again.

...

*Dorsey Corcoran is found dead, his skull caved in and his blood and brains spattered across his bedroom wall. His father's fingerprints are smeared in red on the handle of his best hammer.*

*Eddie Corcoran is reported missing. But his father is already in custody, and even though he pleads innocence over his second child, the police*

*don't bother looking.*

...

Halloween in Derry, Bill supposes, is a lot like Halloween in most of small-town America. Carved pumpkins are placed in beds of straw, piled in the corners of porches and on steps. The trees turn red and russet, leaves drifting to lay in the gutters, leaving skeletal branches to stretch up towards cloud-laden sky.

Georgie is excited. He's *always* excited, but the promise of costumes and candy means that there's a steady stream of chatter in the house.

(He hasn't asked about Pennywise since the day he told Bill that the clown had woken up. Bill hopes – knows – that Pennywise has been kind in allowing Georgie to forget.)

Georgie wants to be a superhero. He wants to be a ninja turtle. He wants to be a pirate and a vampire and a zombie and an astronaut. Bill stays quiet and lets his parents navigate the logistics of sticking tin foil to cardboard and curbing Georgie's more outlandish ideas. He already knows that he's going to be the one stuck taking Georgie from house to house so that he can fill his plastic bucket.

He lets his focus drift – past Georgie's excitement, past his father's boredom (and his thoughts about the receptionist at work), past his mother's resigned suspicion – and lets his gaze slide out of focus until grey gathers in his peripherals. He exhales slowly; breathes in deep as leaves curl in the autumn breeze, dancing against the window pane. He watches as their red darkens, smears, paints into a familiar, eerie



smile.

His heart skips. He slips back into himself and returns his attention back to his dinner, but his belly is in knots with sudden anticipation and his appetite gone. His hand shakes so much that he has to set his fork down.

His mother glances at him, an odd look in her eyes. He's not sure what she sees, but she smiles – faint – and looks back at his brother. But Georgie too has been distracted.

“What’re you dressing as, Billy?” he asks. “You have to dress up too.”

“I, ah.” He looks back up at the window. The smears and the smiles are gone; a single red leaf clings to the edge of the frame. “A c-clown,” he says. “Uh-I’ll b-be a c-c-clown.”

...

Pennywise leans over him, straddling his hips, with traces of gore still painting the corners of its smile and a soft “hiya Billy” to announce its presence – as if Bill hasn’t felt it watching him since dinner.

He reaches up, traces the line of a red marking down the length of Pennywise’s face down to its dripping mouth. In a flash he remembers fingers snapping and oozing between too-many teeth, and he lets his touch skate the edges of Pennywise’s lower lip.

“Hi,” he replies. “I mm-missed you.”

Pennywise giggles, leans closer, and accepts the blood-saturated kiss. He doesn't know which of the missing kids it was today; the posters are building up on walls and telephone poles, beginning to layer over each other. He doesn't quite care. He *likes* it – likes that Pennywise likes it. He moans softly as teeth scrape over his skin and he touches his tongue to their sharp edges. His hand slides back up to card through copper hair, and as his body starts to react, he feels Pennywise shift on top of him.

There's still pyjamas and a duvet between them, but the sensation still makes him gasp. He pushes his hips up – hears and feels as Pennywise release a soft, hissing breath between them. A clawed hand wraps around his shoulder, holding him steady as Pennywise presses down harder onto him, driving the air from Bill's lungs and sending pleasure shooting up his spine.

(He thinks, briefly, of the magazines Richie stole from his dad's office one day – of bronzed women with their legs apart, their hands cupped over their rounded breasts. He remembers the hot flush of confused embarrassment, not knowing where to look.

He doesn't feel embarrassed now. Not with Pennywise. Never with Pennywise.)

He thrusts up to meet Pennywise's every slow, downward grind. He pants into the spaces between kisses, nipping and sucking at Pennywise's lip in a way that he knows the clown likes – knows because he can *feel it*, skirting against the edges of his own pleasure –

and tugging at copper hair. Pennywise growls when Bill comes, spilling hot into his pyjamas. It breaks their kiss and ducks its head lower, tracing its red-painted nose along the length of Bill's neck and making him shudder.

...

"Is she pretty?" his mother asks him. He's in the kitchen, sipping coffee with too much sugar and trying to stay awake as he waits for his sheets and his pyjamas to finish drying. He'd managed to get the blood out after the second wash. The come, too.

He blinks up at her as she helps herself to a cup of coffee from the pot. "Wuh-wh-huh?"

"The girl you like," she says. She brushes her hand over his hair, and he can't stop himself from jumping at the contact. Her touches are so much gentler than Pennywise's – the clown always grips him hard and pulls him close – and he can't remember the last time his mother touched him so casually.

Before his dad's latest affair started, he thinks.

"The one you keep drifting off and thinking about," she continues, pretending like she didn't notice Bill's flinch. There's a wistfulness in her voice that makes him feel sad, in a way.

He doesn't want to think about it. He thinks about the question instead, of the bright copper of Pennywise's hair, and the way the deadlights dance in its eyes and behind its teeth. The way it teases

but doesn't mock, the way it plays and kisses and looks at Bill when it thinks he doesn't know, and –

“Yeah,” he says. “I-uh-sh-she’s p-pretty.”

(She? It? He? What?)

“You going to ask her out?” his mother asks.

“Ah-I-uh, I d-did,” he says. It’s a lie, but only because they seem to have skipped that step between the death and the dreams and the night-time visits. “Sh-she s-said yes.”

(*She?*)

### 3. Halloween

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Here's your porn, you thirsty bastards. Please read the updated tags before continuing.

On a side note, I have one more scheduled update before I go on holiday for a month. I do have the option of taking a laptop with me, but I don't know if I'll be able to stick to my fortnightly schedule with any degree of success. So! Do I a) try this and take a laptop on holiday, or b) update two chapters and a side-story in two weeks time and then go on holiday guilt-free. Opinions please!

And yes, I did say side-story. Thanks to a review from penni\_saur on the last chapter, I'm going to be writing a collection of outtakes and AUs. If you have any ideas, feel free to suggest them!

The costume isn't right. He hadn't been able to find anything white or grey or vaguely Elizabethan in style. There's no starched ruff around his neck, no fitted doublet or stockings. Instead he's in bright, clashing colours: yellow dungarees with candy corn orange pompoms down the front, a purple and green striped shirt with a frilled collar and puffed out sleeves, and cartoonish red shoes. He looks gaudy, compared to the image he'd had in his head when he'd made his suggestion. But then again, he knows that Pennywise doesn't want to look like a proper clown so much as one that might star in a horror movie. It wants to *frighten*.

*(Fear seasons the meat.)*

Still, even though the costume is wrong, he can get the makeup right.

He dabs white greasepaint over his face and neck, and with careful brushstrokes he daubs his nose and lips with scarlet. He keeps his hand as steady as possible as he draws lines up the length of his face, curving from the corners of his lips to slash through his eyes like the

markings of a cheetah.

He still doesn't look quite right. His mouth is thinner and his cheekbones aren't high enough, and the paint makes his eyes look even greener rather than blue or (rarer) orange. But. His homage, he supposes, will do.

Georgie gives him a strange look when he comes downstairs, treading carefully in his oversized shoes. It's a wide-eyed look, slightly panicked and confused. He looks like Bill reminds him of something, and a gentle brush against Georgie's mind brings a memory of rain and a queasy, uncertain feeling of creeping fear; the smell of sewage and popcorn.

(Pennywise let him forget, but there's a part of Georgie that never really will; a part that knows he was lucky to be allowed to live.)

Bill smiles at him, wide and bright, and he ignores the reflexive scowl when he ruffles Georgie's hair before grabbing his own bucket for candy. Just because he's a bit old for trick-or-treating, it doesn't mean he can't enjoy the spoils. Georgie grumbles behind his back as he pulls on his pirate hat, and their mother swoops it, setting it at a rakish angle and promising Georgie that he's the most terrifying pirate in all of Maine.

She glances at Bill, at his makeup, and that odd expression flickers over her face too.

(She was small, twenty-seven years ago. Younger than Georgie is now. But children disappeared then, too, until the Black Spot burned down.

The bodies were never found, were they?)

"Keep an eye on him, Bill," she says. "And both of you stay safe."

"Y-yeah, Mm-om," Bill promises.

Georgie will be safe with him. They'll be the safest people in all of Derry. He knows that Pennywise will be out tonight, hunting amongst the throngs of children – luring them away into the dark, dank of the sewer. Bill, and those he keeps with him, are the only exceptions:

Pennywise has promised him that much, oddly determined to not cause Bill any pain.

*(Billy won't always be so attached to the food-humans.)*

...

*The faces of the other children will stay with him forever. The looks he gets as he passes them, Georgie's hand held firmly in his own. He doesn't look like Pennywise, but the paint on his face is familiar to so many of them.*

*So, so many.*

*He takes Georgie from house to house, their buckets filling with every knock, and he smiles.*

...

It's the middle of the night when Bill slides out of bed. He can't sleep. He's been tossing and turning for what feels like hours, waiting unsatisfied. He sheds his pyjamas and redresses, not in his bright costume, but in darker clothes. He's already wiped the greasepaint from his face and neck, carefully removed all traces of it from behind his ears and under his jaw. He's himself again, tired and frustrated at his inability to rest, and lonely. So lonely and so certain that his loneliness isn't entirely his own.

Georgie is asleep across the hall, crashed out after his sugar high. Their parents are in bed, and when he strains his ears, he can hear his father's soft snores. Outside, the trick-or-treaters are gone, chased home by the rain. The streets are empty, streetlights shining slick on the wet asphalt. Bill makes his way downstairs, listening closely for any change; there is none. It's a relief. He needs, with every fibre of his being, to leave the house and go to Pennywise, but he doesn't want to face the consequences if his parents (his father) ever discover he snuck out in the middle of the night.

The threat is there, but it's not enough to stop him. He grabs his shoes and his jacket and the spare key, and he slips from the back door into the night.

His heart is pounding. He looks back up at his house, at the dark windows. No sign of life.

He'd spotted Pennywise twice while he was out with Georgie. Once, he caught a glimpse of copper hair and bright eyes shining from a storm drain. The second time, it had been standing under the eaves of a house, gaze red and predatory as it studied a group of girls dressed as fairies and princesses. Two sightings, and a constant nudging at the edges of his awareness.

*(Hunger. Prey. Eat.*

*Mate?*

*No. Mate is having fun.)*

He had thought that Pennywise would come to see him as it always does. It hasn't. It hasn't come to him at all tonight. It hasn't loomed over him in the dark and pressed dripping wet kisses to his lips. It hasn't spoken to him, hasn't run claw-tipped fingers through his hair. It hasn't -

Bill misses it. He wants it, *craves* it. He wants to see it and hold it and kiss it - just *wants* it - and he knows that he won't be able to sleep without it. Not anymore.

He grabs Silver from its spot by the garage and swings his leg over the seat, letting instincts take over. He has no idea where he's going, but he can feel Pennywise's presence in the back of his mind, pulling him in. He doesn't look back again; pedals fast, instead, and resists the urge to whoop as he usually does when he picks up speed.

He doesn't want to draw attention to himself. At least, not the attention of humans.

Derry blurs past him, dark and lonely, until that guiding instinct screams to *stop* so loudly that he almost falls off his bike.

He looks around wildly, until his eyes settle on the Niebolt house.

It looks terrible in the daytime, rotting on its foundations, surrounded by dead grass scattered with broken glass. It's even more unappealing



in the dark, looking for all the world like a haunted house from a low-budget horror movie. It's a wreck, unwelcoming and dangerous. The homeless people who ride the trainline that runs behind it are supposed to sleep in there sometimes, according to his parents, but Bill doubts it. He doubts because he can sense Pennywise all over the house like a miasma. *It* is here, and Bill knows what it does to intruders, even when it would rather be sleeping.

There's a creak. The shadows on the sagging porch deepen as the front door swings open. Bill swallows. He dismounts Silver and wheels the bike up the garden path, struggling against choking weeds. He discards his bike in the long grass and takes the stairs two at a time. They're oddly sturdy under his feet, creaking only a little and not giving way.

He runs inside, into the dark, closing the door behind him.

...

*Three trick-or-treaters never came home: Veronica Grogan, Cheryl Lamonica and Esther Sinclair.*

*They're floating, still dressed as fairy-princesses.*

*Their parents are hysterical. Tomorrow, a curfew will be announced. It won't be enough.*

...

The air inside the house is thick with the smell of decay. It smells like Pennywise, he thinks, and feels some of the tension in his body relax. It feels like home.

His eyes adjust slowly to the darkness. He finds furniture in the shadows, doorways and stairs. He explores, near-blind, knowing that Pennywise knows he's here. The clown does not appear.

(The prickling sensation of being watched. He didn't feel it earlier, with Georgie, but he wonders now if his attempt at mimicry has been taken as an insult.)

He finds Pennywise when he's on his second stumbling circuit of the

house. It's a tall shadow lurking in the dark of the doorway leading to the cellar; blue eyes glowing like stars. Bill's breath freezes in his throat, but Pennywise's eyes are *blue* and there's a brush against his mind that feels almost like happiness and -

He crosses the room, his steps suddenly confident, and reaches out. His fingers curl in the stiff fabric of Pennywise's ruff and he tugs downward; Pennywise comes willingly, accepting Bill's kiss and raising its hands to clasp his shoulders and the back of his neck.

"I mmmised you," Bill whispers, and the sound of his voice surprises him. He barely stutters. He sounds older, darker somehow; his voice deeper than it should be.

Pennywise doesn't respond except to kiss him again, its tongue pressing into his mouth - suffocating thick and wet and metallic with the taste of blood. Its claws dig sharp into his shoulders, its grip growing tighter. Bill whines softly, kissing back as much as he can; clutching back just as tightly as his tongue traces along row after row after row of razor-sharp teeth.

He's not quite aware of being guided backwards before his knees hit the edge of the ancient sofa. Pennywise shoves him down onto the lumpy cushions without ceremony, eliciting an alarming creak from the furniture. It doesn't, by some miracle, collapse, and Pennywise clambers on top of him, straddling his hips as it usually does. The familiar position sends heat spiralling through Bill's gut. He's already hard in his jeans, aching and eager. He's panting against Pennywise's mouth, arching up as clawed hands skate down the length of his torso.

He should feel afraid. Those hands can dismember a body in a matter of seconds. He doesn't: he trusts it not to.

He lets own hands wander, desperately seeking more. More contact, more of that cold, oddly hard flesh. More everything. He knows that Pennywise can make itself appear however it likes; doesn't even know if Pennywise is male or female or something in between.

*(She, but not. She, but beyond. Human boundaries cannot be applied.*

It. )

There isn't a duvet between them this time. Just clothes that suddenly feel a size too small. Bill squirms, bucks up. He wants more.

*(Lesser beings require so much contact with each other. Smaller gods fight and mate while slaughtering each other across the turtle's spewed universes. Humans fight and fuck and touch so much, like the petty creatures they are, but this -)*

Claws catch in the fastenings of Bill's jeans. He gasps at the touch, the sudden pressure, his head tilting back as Pennywise guides his erection out, careful not to slice him open. Pennywise's skin is hard and cold and slightly chitinous, like the legs of a spider. Bill feels old-fashioned clothing fade to nothing under his grasp, and he flexes his fingers against its suddenly bare hips as it hovers over him, one hand wrapped around his cock.

It pauses. The hesitation feels heavy somehow.

He looks up into blazing blue eyes and on the edge of his senses, he hears the piping music from the dreams they share together.

"Wh-what are yuh-you w-wuh-aiting for?" he asks.

He can feel it riffling through his mind, though what it's looking for, it doesn't let on. Then, slowly, it releases its grip on his cock, only for something else to replace its fingers. Something long and cold and wet - not unlike its tongue - that winds around him from tip to root. He jumps, looks down, but can't see anything in the shadows between them. Pennywise settles onto him, shifting slightly as the strange appendage begins to ripple along Bill's length, squeezing and stroking. Milking him. He gasps, throwing back his head and pushing up, hands scrabbling at Pennywise's hips.

Pennywise hisses softly, shifting against him, taking him deeper. It flexes around him. Pleasure curls at the base of his spine. He thrusts up. It feels so -

*(Good. Maybe this is why humans spend so much time doing this.)*

He doesn't last. He *can't* last. He wants to cry when he comes,

because it's *over*; he can feel heat crawling up his neck and his cheeks as his eyes sting. He presses his face into Pennywise's shoulder, breathing in the scent of blood and mould and cotton-candy. Claws scratch at his scalp - gentle. Kind, almost.

*(Strange little human-dreamer. Why should it be angry that the purpose of this act has been served?)*

Bill manages not to cry. He can't actually bring himself to, not when he can feel nothing but satisfaction and smugness from the being in his lap. He lets himself relax instead, pressing kisses to exposed skin and running the tip of his nose along the exposed part of Pennywise's throat, above the ruff and below its ear. There's a pleased sound from above him - almost a purr - and he reaches up to draw Pennywise down into another kiss.

He's still inside of it. Every so often, Pennywise ripples around him, setting pleasure-pain sparking at the base of his spine.

"Wuh-why d-didn't you visit?" he asks.

"You wanted to have fun with your *brother*," Pennywise says, and there's a note of jealousy in its voice. It doesn't understand. It *hates* - that much is clear from the venom in its tone and the lightning flash thought of the not turtle. It accompanies its words with another flexing movement around Bill's cock and he gasps. He jolts up, pushing deeper. He's hard again and it hurts a little, but it feels so good.

He kisses the corner of Pennywise's mouth. "I suh-still w-wuh-wan-t you," he says. "All the time. I-"

He's cut off when Pennywise clamps down on him, rocking its hips and stealing the words from his tongue with a kiss. He shoves his thoughts towards Pennywise instead, the mad jumble of thoughts and feelings that have been taking him over.

His second orgasm aches beautifully. He's left dizzy and breathless, boneless. He looks up into star-like eyes, ancient and beyond knowing. He's exhausted, on the edge of sleep when he feels the nudge back. Thoughts too vast to fully comprehend; emotions both

familiar and alien. A sense of importance.

He understands.

Overwhelmed and exhausted, he sleeps.

...

*He sees the deadlights; hears their music. He dreams of wandering through their dancing lights and the flickering shadows they cast.*

*He dreams of strange, ovoid pillars again. They tower over him as he walks through their jumbled cloisters, mindful of the long spider-like legs that so carefully arrange them.*

...

He wakes alone, cold and curled up on a tattered green sofa. He's roused by pale yellow light slanting through filthy windows and an aching hunger in his belly. Around him, the house is silent, just as sinister in the morning light as it had looked in the dark. He stretches, tucks his limp cock back into his jeans and lets his gaze drift over the moth-eaten furniture and the patterns of his own footprints winding through decades of dust.

He's never felt more at home, and it takes him a moment to realise why: radiating from under the ground, he can feel Pennywise's glee.

## 4. Losers

### Notes for the Chapter:

You've all been so lovely about me vanishing for, like, all of November. Have an early chapter!

“Is that Betty Ripsom’s mom?”

Bill looks up, squints through the bright summer sunlight, and spots her. She looks terrible. Pale and haunted, with her hair in wild tangles around her face. She’s still in her slippers, he realises, and there are tears tracking down her cheeks. There’s...no guilt, when he looks at her. Not even the tiniest twinge of it. There should be, but knowing that isn’t enough to make him consider approaching and telling her what really happened to her daughter – especially when she’s surrounded by the police. No one has been linked to the missing children, yet, and they’re hoping to see something today. To catch a hint of something suspicious.

They won’t.

He watches as Mrs Ripsom scans the crowd, searching for her daughter; her hands are clasped under her chin, her eyes wide and frantic. He can feel her fear from here, the faint strand of her hope, and he tastes the echo of blood on his tongue.

“What’s she doing here? Does she think Betty’s going to turn up for the last day?”

Bill shrugs, shakes his head and turns away. He gathers with his friends and empties his backpack into the bin with a feeling of relief. School is over and with it, his punishment.

He had known on Halloween that sneaking out would have consequences if he was caught. He hadn’t meant to fall asleep in the sofa in the Niebolt house; hadn’t meant to arrive home after the sun had risen. He’d found his mother frantic and Georgie teary-eyed. His father, white with fury, had loomed over him as soon as he’d set foot in the door, and the second that his fist had landed on Bill’s face, he’d

known that his father was going to die.

Pennywise hasn't done it yet. Even though months have passed and the icy silence between Bill and his father has grown, Pennywise still hasn't acted against him.

*(Oh, there's a plan for him, Billy. He's going to suffer. Suffer and burn for touching you .)*

"Are we still going to the Barrens tomorrow, or are you still grounded?" Stan asks.

"For being a dumbass and wandering around at night while a serial killer's in the loose," Richie adds.

Bill punches him lightly on the arm, rolling his eyes. "I sh-should b-be okay to g-go out," he says.

After his father had let up with his fists, he'd grounded Bill for the rest of the school year. Every evening, every weekend since, he's spent in his room, watching the seasons change through his window. He hasn't been as lonely as he should have been: the Losers are loyal friends, and Pennywise has been with him every night, in his head and his bed.

"About time," Richie says.

"You're lucky you just got grounded," Eddie says - not for the first time. "Mom would have killed me if I snuck out like that. Have you any idea how much danger -"

Bill tunes out the rest of the lecture, focuses instead on the rush of Eddie's thoughts. He's wishing he was brave enough to sneak out, away from his mother's control, and visit Richie in the dark; there's a flash of him throwing pebbles at a curtained window, climbing the trellis on the outside of the Tosier house, kisses. Bill smiles. His friends are adorable, even if they aren't brave enough to tell the world their secret. There's a tiny part of him wishes he and Pennywise could be so sweet in their togetherness, impossible as it is.

*(It is?)*

As much as Bill loves it, there is no innocence about their relationship. There never has been. There's too much blood in their kisses, too much death, for them to have something like Richie and Eddie do.

*(We're **better**.)*

As wistful as he is sometimes, Bill wouldn't change a thing.

He cycles straight home for the last time, basking in the afternoon sunlight and the excitement of summer.

...

He waits in the living room for his parents' verdict. As far as they've been aware, he's been amply punished: isolated from everyone for months on end. Still, his father glowers at him over the beer bottle in his fist. His mother is twisting her wedding ring around her finger, her mouth an unhappy line; she's comparing her husband to the man she married. Bill's father, in the other hand, is wallowing in dislike and resentment.

*(His secretary is having a baby. His father wishes she wasn't.)*

Bill watches back, unmoving and unmoved by his father's distaste. It's nothing unusual, and he's come to expect it.

"It's been months, Zach," his mother says. "He's been good as gold. His grades have improved. Let him enjoy his summer."

Her mind flashes briefly to the conversation they'd had before Halloween, of Bill's 'girlfriend.' He hasn't mentioned any girl since and his mother wonders if his punishment has been the death of his first romance. Bill can't tell her it's the opposite: almost a year without anything but school to distract him from Pennywise and its company has been...good. For them.

"Fine," his father says. "Break the rules one more time..." He lets the threat go unsaid, and Bill nods.

*(Just a little longer, Billy, and he'll regret it. He won't survive touching you.)*



“Thuh-thank yuh-you,” he says.

His father rolls his eyes like he always does, and Bill hopes viciously that Pennywise will eat them; will pluck them from his skull with long claws and pop them like candy between its teeth.

(Yes.)

He escapes to his room, his freedom in the morning assured.

...

The sun prickles on his skin, and Bill turns his face up to it. He and Stan, Eddie and Richie are out in the Barrens, the beginnings of a childish dam crossing the Kenduskeag. It keeps bursting, sending cold water rushing over their legs and feet. Further downstream, the sewer entrance where Bill once hid from Bowers and his gang spills sewage into the clear water. It stinks, even from where they're playing, but under the rancid stench, Bill can pick up the familiar copper-sweet smell of blood and candy corn. It makes him smile as much as the freedom does, and when they eventually abandon their dam and flop back onto the grass, he looks longingly down at that shadowy pipe.

There's no point in going closer. Pennywise is hunting, its hunger a familiar ache along the edges of Bill's senses.

*(The fat boy is reading, leaning over a book of Old Derry. It remembers eating the author. The fat boy flicks through the pages, skimming over photographs, and his fear begins to rise - seasoning the plentiful meat on his bones.*

*So much meat, this one. So much - and Billy hasn't claimed this human as one of his.)*

Bill blinks away images of a blond head bent over stacks of books, and silently wishes Pennywise luck on its hunt. He turns his head to watch Eddie puff at his inhaler, snarling insults at Richie in between breaths. Richie is laughing, and there's a bunch of fronded grass stems clutched between his fingers. Eddie's allergies are odd in that they only ever seem to manifest in his own head, but only Richie ever dares to taunt him with them. He's the only one Eddie allows close

enough to do it.

Next to them, Stan is ignoring the chaos and is making a note in his birdwatching book. It's soggy around the edges from their adventure in the creek, but he doesn't seem disappointed. Actually, despite the carry-on between Eddie and Richie, all of them are radiating peace. Contentment.

It's nice.

So, Bill is entirely calm when his heart rate spikes in time to a chase. He feels a burst of cruel humour that isn't his own and sees the fat boy running through different eyes.

(Pennywise sees the world in a way that human sense can't comprehend, with colours and patterns that are invisible to human eyes, that hurt to try and understand.

Bill has seen himself through Pennywise's gaze. He *shines*.)

His visions of Pennywise are getting stronger by the day. Every time they touch and kiss and fuck(*mate*) make love their link grows stronger, more powerful. Sometimes Bill thinks it's going to take him over entirely, devour his heart and mind and leave him as nothing on his own.

Most of the time, he doesn't think it's a bad thing.

He rolls onto his belly, propping his chin on his folded arms. "Do yuh-you w-wuh-want to go suh-wimming tomorrow?"

"At the quarry?" Richie asks. "Sure."

"Do you know how filthy that water is?" Eddie grumbles.

"Better than here," Stan argues, waving a hand at the sewer opening and the ever-present stream of grey water gushing from its mouth. Eddie grimaces, but he nods.

There's a sharp thud behind Bill's breastbone; his vision swims as he catches a glimpse of the blond boy launching himself backwards off the kissing bridge and tumbles backwards down the bank. There's a

blaze of pain and hatred that isn't his own, and he gasps from the strength of it. For a split-second Bill loathes him, this boy he's never met, as he watches him scramble to his feet and flee into the trees, heading towards the Barrens.

"Bill? You okay?"

"Yeah," he breathes. "Juh-jjj-huh. Hah. C-cramp." He rubs his calf as if to prove it, and his friends let it go, believing him in an instant.

He feels the numb rush of fear and panic before he hears the boy; before the stranger he hates and hungers for collapses to his hands and knees in the creek.

"Jesus Christ!" Richie yelps. "What the hell happened to you?!"

"Is he dying? He looks like he's dying," Stan says, scrambling to his feet.

Bill pushes himself up, looking down at the wounds that Pennywise left, deep gouges on the boy's belly - not quite enough to disembowel him. The kid is turning stark white under the ruddy flush of exertion, and his eyes are wide with panic. He's going into shock.

Bill knows he should feel more than he does. He should be horrified, edging into panic just like Eddie and Stan and Richie. He should be terrified. But just as with his father, there's nothing.

Nothing but (*hunger and insult and rage at this petty thing for lashing out, for escaping. For running to Billy - the only one with the power to save him*) a sense of indignation that this kid somehow managed to hit Pennywise hard enough to wind it in that vital moment. He shoves his dislike down and helps Richie pull the kid to his feet, out of the water and onto the bank.

"Th-there was a monster," the kid pants. "On the bridge. In the - in the library. It was. It chased. I-"

"Dude, calm down. You're, like, bleeding to death," Richie says.

"We need to get help," Eddie says. "Medicine. An ambulance. Anything. Holy shit."

Bill senses Pennywise's retreat, its resentment lingering like a cloud in his mind.

"C-come on," he says. "Wuh-we should t-take him to the f-f-f"

"The pharmacy, Bill, Jesus," Richie mutters. "Right. Come on, man."

...

It's not Bill's idea, in the end, to invite both the fat kid - Ben, his name is - and Beverley Marsh swimming with them the next day. Richie blurts out the invitation in between ordering Eddie to suck Ben's wound. Their argument pitches into the hysterical, and Ben - smiling shyly - accepts. So does Beverley.

Bill's eyes catch on the graffiti on the wall behind them, on the face of his lover as it appears amongst the paintings, and shudders as a wave of resentment rolls down his spine.

*(Not fair, Billy.)*

He sucks in a breath and offers Ben and Beverley a smile each, and he says nothing - nothing to object to their presence or to welcome them. He's not sure what to do, really. He barely knows Beverley: he kissed her once in a school play, but hasn't spoken to her since. Ben is new in town and Bill doesn't know him at all; he hasn't even seen him before today. But Ben's talk of a monster on the loose, the injuries he has to back up his claim...they've caught the attention of his friends, and Bill knows he doesn't stand a chance of distracting them.

He glances again to the wall, to painted yellow eyes and a twisted smile, and he feels a sense of foreboding.

He wishes he was still grounded.

...

He presses a kiss to Pennywise's chest, roughly where he knows Ben managed to land a kick. Pennywise is cold to the touch and oddly still beneath him, its gaze fixed on his face, eyes flickering between blue and orange. It's been strangely passive all evening, even during

sex; it let Bill push it down onto its back instead of riding him as it usually does. The change of position had been nice, but now it bothers Bill more than anything. He can feel its disquiet in the back of his mind. Pennywise doesn't want to hurt him by eating a new friend, but the loss of its prey is still irritating it. The injury, for all that it seems to have hurt Bill more than Pennywise, is just an added insult.

Bill stretches out alongside it. They're naked, twisted in sheets he knows he's going to have to wash before his parents wake up (again). He doesn't mind the blood and the semen, the sweat and the saliva, but he knows that his mother would. But laundry is a task for the morning; Pennywise is here now, and infinitely more important.

He props his head up on Pennywise's chest. It looks odd like this, to human eyes. Thinner than it probably should be, and with that same oddly hard texture that belongs to a being less humanoid in nature. It has no nipples and no navel, which Bill has found bizarre the first time he'd noticed. It's smooth and blank from the neck down, save for the shadowy gradation where its pale arms darken to clawed, void-black hands. One of those hands is draped across his shoulders, cradling the base of his neck. Every so often, an elongated pinkie finger dips lower, tracing over the faded scar that Pennywise gave him at their first meeting.

It feels domestic, lazing together like this. It feels horribly perfect in every sense, and Bill's trying to hide it, but his heart is already breaking knowing that soon the cycle will come to an end and Pennywise will hibernate once more. He doesn't know how long it will be - Pennywise itself has very little concept of time in what it considers to be fleeting, human measurements.

*(More aware. This is not what hunts used to be. Longer. Billy needs attention and there's mating to be done before sleep comes again.*

*Hunts used to be a blink awake. A blink and a shift back to this world and away from the dreamlands. Brief and bloody. It does not want to sleep again. Not this time. )*

However long it turns out to be, it will be too long.

“Yuh-you ssstill wuh-ant to eat him, right?” he asks.

Pennywise nods. “Yes,” it says, its voice coming out as a soft hiss. “I’ll make him float. I’ll feast on his flesh and leave his bones for the worms.”

“Bones are c-crunchy, though,” Bill says.

Pennywise hums. Its eyes flicker back to blue and a soft, unearthly titter spills from its lips. Its hunger spills across their link, and Bill feels his stomach rumble.

“Can I eat him, Billy?” Pennywise asks.

It doesn’t need to ask. Not really. Bill is well aware which of them is the stronger. It’s being *nice*, asking his permission like this.

“Shuh-sure,” he says.

Pennywise is generous enough, giving in to Bill’s requests for safety for his mother and Georgie and all of his friends. Bill can be generous too. For all that Ben seems nice enough, he’s too new an acquaintance. Bill doesn’t know him, and his loyalty, his heart, his everything belong to Pennywise now.

It’s too late.

He feels no guilt when Pennywise smiles. Not even guilt that he doesn’t feel guilty. All he feels is satisfaction and pride - and pleasure as Pennywise guides him up into another kiss.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

P.S. Please don't kill me, Ben fans.

## 5. Curse

### Notes for the Chapter:

I'm back and ready to take another swandive into hell ~

The posting schedule of every two weeks is now resumed. Thank you for your patience, you wonderful monsters.

There's a bandage over Ben's belly when he joins them at the quarry. It's stark white against the pale expanse of his skin, and Bill only glances at it once before peering over the edge of the cliff and down into the green-blue water. Looking at Ben means he can feel the lingering traces of Pennywise's anger, its satisfaction that Bill didn't object to its plans. He watches Richie spit - Losers' tradition - and follows the arc of his saliva down into the water below. He copies it. The others follow suit, Eddie arguing that mass is more important as his offering splatters onto the cliff-edge; Richie's voice squeaking as he argues.

There's no malice between them. No hatred except that which clings like a shadow to the edges of Bill's mind.

The question of who goes first has them all hesitating. They gaze uncomfortably down at the water below. It's blue-green, still and murky, and it's impossible to see the bottom. The cliff seems too high, all of a sudden, and Bill wishes they'd climbed further down.

"I'll go," says a voice, and they turn as one to see Beverley Marsh already undoing the buttons of her dress, exposing plain cotton underwear and pale skin. Bill blinks as she looks up at them, flashing a grin. She likes the attention, the surprise at her actions.

"Sissies," she says, and she's laughing at them. Her dress tumbles to the ground as she races past them, throwing herself from the edge of the cliff and into the water below.

"What the fuck?" Richie yelps as she passes them.

Bill shoots him a smile, takes a step towards the edge, and leaps.

...

*(Billy's father goes to work with a flask of coffee and a lunch in a brown paper bag like he always does. He greets his colleagues in a jovial voice and works through the morning, poring over plans for renovations and expansions. He takes a long lunch and uses it to fuck his secretary in a motel room halfway down the road to Salem's Lot.*

*There's a spark of life in the woman's belly that makes Billy sad in ways that Pennywise doesn't understand and Billy can't explain. Billy's father hates it, but he hasn't told her to terminate it even though he wants to. He strokes her hair instead and promises that he'll leave his wife for her.*

*He glimpses the red of a balloon through the gap in the motel room curtain, and Pennywise drools at the resultant spike of unease.*

*He doesn't know yet, but hurting Billy was his last mistake.)*

...

There's something oddly Pennywise-like about Bev at this angle, something about the curl of dark copper hair at the back of her neck and the pale slant of her cheekbones. Bill looks away from her before she can catch him staring, missing his bondmate fiercely. He wishes Pennywise was here. Wishes it was just the two of them. Wishes they could do something like go swimming together.

*(Why not, Billy?)*

*We can?*

The image that flashes through his brain is strong enough to make his vision black out. For a moment, his friends are gone and Pennywise is there, its long legs wrapped around his waist and its hands curling around his shoulders and twisting in his hair. He can feel its weight in his arms and the cold grasp of its body around his cock, and it's so real that when he's broken out of their fantasy by a splash he almost feels like crying.

The others are diving under the surface looking for something that



brushed against Richie's foot. Bill dives down with them, willing his erection to die, only to spot a dark shadow swimming through the murky water.

"It's a turtle," he says, once he breaks the surface.

The sense of anger, of fear, that slides down his spine isn't his own. *Pennywise...*

*(Universes spew endlessly across the void, expanding in the dark; stars spin out, their planets dancing in their gravity. Lesser gods emerge from dust and atoms, fighting and fucking and consuming each other as galaxies collide. Through it all, the not-turtle swims, its gaping maw vomiting creation into the dark.*

Maturin creates with ease, but cannot destroy without the aid of lesser beings. I am opposite, a devourer of worlds. Maturin creates without thought, but cannot stomach my destruction.

He is moving, Billy. Spiralling closer. The -)

A flash of ovoid pillars cracking, crumbling. Bill sucks in a breath and swipes wet hair out of his face, trying to temper his sudden fear and the surge of absolute hatred that runs through him.

He turns his mind to other things: to Eddie and Richie and the kiss they shared under the water where no one could see; to Bev and the bubbling lightness of her thoughts, to the first flutterings of attraction she feels; to Ben and his jealousy and need to prove himself. Their thoughts are simple things, less overpowering, and they help Bill find his way back to himself.

It's getting harder. So much harder to drag himself away from Pennywise and the mindscape they share.

The water is suddenly too cold. It prickles on his skin and he shivers uncontrollably. He starts swimming for the rocks, and doesn't care when the others follow him. He just wants out. He wants Pennywise, to see that his mate is fine.

*(Yes, Billy. Hunting.)*

He glimpses his father and a woman getting into a car, and feels nothing except a vague curiosity about Pennywise's plans. He's never seen Pennywise hunt an adult before, and his growing apathy towards his father's existence means that any discomfort he should have felt is swallowed up by anticipation for what is going to happen.

*(Small humans are easier to lure away, to season with tasty, tasty fear. It has devoured worlds, galaxies, but small humans are the sweetest prey.)*

He feels warmer by the time he climbs out, and he perches on a boulder to dry. The others join him, Beverley stretching out in front of them all to sun herself, hiding her eyes behind large sunglasses. Bill studies her - tries not to be too obvious. Her momentary similarity to Pennywise is gone, but he still can't help but compare them. They're both pale, but Pennywise is unnaturally so - it's hard and flat and strangely shaped without any dips or curves, while humans are so much softer.

Bill averts his gaze. He knows which he prefers.

...

When Beverley rolls over, the others shift, embarrassed, looking away from her. Bill, leaning back on his hands with his face turned up to the sky and images of Pennywise's hunt floating through his mind, smiles at the frantic racing of their thoughts - the half-formed fantasies and the urgent needs to be elsewhere. He feels Bev's amusement, her pleasure at being found beautiful, and then her curiosity when Richie dives into Ben's backpack looking for a distraction and pulls out a folder. It's filled with pictures, dated with Ben's scratchy handwriting, and newspaper clippings of missing people and mangled bodies.

"What the hell?" Richie asks. Bill pulls the folder closer, flipping through pages. He feels a stirring of curiosity that isn't his own; amusement at human confusion over previous hunts.

He runs his fingers over the photo of a burned-down nightclub, tracing over the number of deaths. It makes him pause: the number is low, too low, given that Pennywise is capable of devouring entire galaxies. Everything it's done in Derry seems as though it's on a small

scale. Too small.

*Why? Are you eating enough?*

*(Yes, Billy.)*

"It's interesting," Ben says. "Derry's...not like any town I've been in before. People die or disappear six times the national average. And that's just grownups. Kids are worse. Way, way worse."

There's a silence that follows his words that itches at Bill's mind. He can sense his friends' disquiet; hear their thoughts as they begin to suspect that something's wrong - more wrong than the serial killer that the police have told them is hunting the children of Derry.

"I've got more stuff at home if you want to see," Ben offers.

They do, almost. It's a morbid, reluctant sort of curiosity that gets them moving. They dress in near silence, gathering their clothes and bikes and making their way into town. It's only when they're on their way that the doubt begins to set in: Ben is just a bit too weird for them, a bit too much of a loner with too much time on his hands.

"Who the hell even collects this stuff?"

"I don't know, Richie, maybe he wants to make friends."

Bill hides his smile at their confusion and discomfort. He wants to see what Ben has collected; wants to know for sure how much he suspects Pennywise really exists. All he can really sense from him on the surface, without pushing deeper, is a mild feeling of happiness that he's at the centre of so much attention. Like Beverley earlier, he likes being the focus of the group.

Bill lets his mind drift just enough to see deeper. Not so deep that he loses track of the road and where he's going, but enough to see more. The world blurs out a little at the edges, but he glimpses Beverley Marsh, pretty and smiling, her signature the only one in a yearbook. He sees himself as Ben sees him, not shining the way he looks to Pennywise, but taller and stronger and handsome, and he feels the stirring of Ben's jealousy when he sees Beverley watching him through Ben's eyes. He hadn't even noticed her looking, back at the

quarry.

Oh.

Ben's doing this for Beverley. Not the Losers, although he likes their attention too, but because he wants Beverley to pay attention to him, to think he's smarter than Bill is. He wants her to *look at him*. That Bill isn't interested is apparently irrelevant, because Ben can't imagine a world where people *don't* find Beverley Marsh beautiful.

Bill slides back to himself when they come to a stop in front of a small house with a neat lawn. He throws Silver down with the rest of the bikes and follows his friends up Ben's yard to the house. It has that strange look of a house barely lived in, and there's an old woman in the living room who has the blue-gleaming eyes of a ghost. Bill glances at her once and turns away. He learned soon after they started appearing to him that it was best to ignore them unless he wanted their attention on him. He's more invested in the minds of the living and in the worlds he sees through Pennywise's dreams.

The woman doesn't see him glancing at her. She stares blankly out of the window, her glowing eyes fixed on something only she has ever seen; her jaw slack and gaping, her blackened tongue drooping out from between her shrivelled lips.

He lags behind as he follows Ben and the others up the stairs with Beverley trailing after him. She'd waited for him, her thoughts fizzing with budding fondness. Ben is, he has to admit, horribly right about her.

(*She **cannot** have you.*)

He gives her a faint smile before he climbs the stairs.

*I don't want her.*

(***My** Billy. If she tries, she dies.*)

Okay.

...

*Carla Morton goes missing. Her dismembered body is found later that day, dumped at the edge of the Barrens, where the Kenduskeag curves down away from the town and flows towards the sea. Stabbed to death, her autopsy reveals traces of semen and a positive test for pregnancy.*

...

Ben's room is...terrifying, in a way. Derry's bloody history is mapped out in photocopied documents and monotone photographs across all four walls. He hasn't connected anything with red string, but it's a close thing.

"What's that?" Richie asks, pointing at one of the documents.

"Derry town charter," Ben replies.

"Huh, nerd alert," Richie scoffs in reply. He's not wrong, but Ben's mind fizzles with low-grade anger. Bill slides away from the rest of them, letting his gaze travel over the mess scattered across Ben's desk. There are homework assignments all jumbled up with slides and statistics on mysterious deaths. He begins to pick through them, listening to the others' thoughts; listening for any suspicions they might have.

He doesn't want them to know about Pennywise. As much as he loves his bondmate, he wants to keep it secret as much as he can. It's too complicated to explain.

"Actually," Ben says, "it's really interesting. Derry started as a beaver trapping colony -"

"Still is! Am I right, boys?"

Stan slaps Richie's attempt at a high five away. His eyes are fixed on the wall.

"Ninety seven people signed the charter to found Derry township," Ben continues, and even though his voice doesn't give anything away, his mind smarts with irritation. He doesn't like being interrupted, and he's not fond of Richie's bravado - he doesn't realise that it's just a front to help keep the rest of them to notice his relationship with Eddie. It's obnoxious, but it works: Bill is the only

one who knows, and that's because he can hear their thoughts.

"Then one winter, they all vanished," Ben continues. "People thought they were attacked, that it was Indians, but there was no evidence. Just a trail of bloody clothes leading to the well house."

Bill's skin prickles. As the others exclaim over the number of deaths, he lifts up a slide and discovers a map of Derry. From the corner of his eye, he sees one of Ben's printed pictures twist, and he knows Pennywise is watching them again.

"Where's the well house?" Stan asks.

"Don't know. Somewhere in town, I guess."

*(A dust-filled wreck of a house with uneven floorboards and moth eaten furniture. Billy on a sofa beneath it, head tipped back and eyes shining up at it.)*

Oh.

He feels a surge of protectiveness. If Ben thinks to project this slide over a map of the sewers, he'll find the house on Niebolt Street in a second, and that would take him straight to Pennywise's lair. In one deft movement, Bill slips the slide into his pocket and moves to join the others, his eyes picking out Pennywise in every image, right there for them all to see if they cared to look (they don't, they're too freaked out). Ben isn't paying attention either, too distracted by Beverley's sudden amusement. He pleads silently for her not to tell anyone even as a brief snippet of music flashes through his head. Bill hides his grin. New Kids on the Block?

It's Eddie, out of all of them, who asks the question they've all wanted to since the quarry; Eddie who puts his disquiet into actual words.

"So, what are you going to do with all this stuff?" he asks. "None of the grownups would believe it has anything to do with the missing kids. So what are you going to do with it?"

Ben shrugs. "I don't know," he says. It's, bizarrely, a question he wasn't expecting.

“We need to stop it,” Beverley says, stepping up behind them. “This thing, whatever it is, we need to stop it before it kills us too. We need to find the well house.”

...

Bill should have known there was more than one map.

## 6. Niebolt

### Notes for the Chapter:

Porn ~

He should have known there was another map.

He should have known that Pennywise – that the *house* - wouldn't take kindly to an influx of strangers.

He should have known –

“I'm not *real* enough for you, Billy?”

He should have known never to say that to Richie.

Pennywise's eyes are gleaming red and orange at it twists around to look at him. Behind it, on the floor, Eddie is cradling a broken arm but is otherwise unharmed. He's staring up at Pennywise in absolute terror, and the force of it makes Bill's head ache.

“Not *real* enough?”

He opens his mouth. He wants to apologise, but the words stick to his tongue. Pennywise turns completely, its movements nothing human as it straightens up to the full height of its current form. Its gloves split open, claws flexing; its face too is splitting apart along one of the cheetah-like stripes on its cheek, revealing the void-black chitin of its not-spider-form. The wave of anger, of disappointment and confusion hits him like a truck. It's so violent that his eyes blur. He chokes on his apology, unable to voice it and unable to make it felt in the face of Pennywise's fury.

He'd been trying to get Richie out of the illusions. He hadn't meant -

He spots movement from the corner of his eye: a blur of red and white and brown. Beverly. He sees the spike in her hands, hears her thoughts and her yell. He jerks forward, reaching out.

“Don't!” is all he manages before she stabs the spike through the side



of Pennywise's skull. Pain tears through his own brain, impossibly intense. There's a ringing in his ears, and in the instant before a blinding flare of light turns the world black, Bill sees Pennywise's face twist into a snarl of fangs and blood and chitin.

He collapses.

...

He's not alone when he wakes up. He's cold and slightly damp, and he moves instinctively closer to the body holding him with long arms. His sense of smell wakes next: popcorn and mould, cotton candy and blood. Pennywise. He relaxes, purses his lips and presses a kiss to whatever part of his lover he's pressed up against.

He keeps his eyes closed. There's a throbbing pressure behind his eyeballs and his head aches in a way he's never experienced before.

Claws scratch across the top of his spine. The brush of Pennywise's consciousness against his own is oddly gentle, given that the last time they were looking at each other, Pennywise seemed ready to eat him. He nudges back. Sends his apologies through the link between them, let's Pennywise see - not for the first time - just how much it means to him. He can't help the tears that seep out from under his lashes, and he grips tighter to the decaying satin that covers Pennywise's body.

"I love you," he whispers, and he doesn't even notice the lack of stutter.

He feels Pennywise prise his thoughts apart, his memories of the day, starting when Ben told the rest of them that he'd figured out where the Well House was; that he wanted to go there. He lets Pennywise see his stuttered objections and the way he was overruled. Beverley had been firmly on Ben's side, and curiosity had won out for the others. They hadn't believed - not really; not until they'd gone inside. He pushes this forward, lets Pennywise examine his interactions with Richie. Let's it see the fun that Bill was having with its illusions before it got too much for his friends. He lets it see Richie's panic, the love he feels for Eddie, the fear Richie had felt when they heard Eddie screaming in pain.

(The house on Niebolt Street is old and decaying and the floor had given way under Eddie's feet, ancient boards cracking and disintegrating after decades of neglect.

Pennywise kept its promise.)

"I love you," Bill whispers again, and he lets Pennywise feel it, pushing the tangled mess of his emotions towards the link they share. "I'm s-sorry."

Claws drag gently up the back of his neck, sliding into the fine hair at the base of his skull. The gesture makes his skin prickle and the throbbing behind his eyes intensifies for a moment before subsiding into a dull ache. He squints his eyes open, lifting his head slightly to look at Pennywise's face. His lover's expression is unreadable, something not helped by the cracks still running up the length of its face, webbing out from the injuries to its head. He watches as Pennywise's eyes lighten to blue once more, and feels its anger fade into something warmer, though just as fierce. He slips one hand up between them to stroke his fingers along the length of a cheetah stripe, testing the cracks in Pennywise's skin.

"Are yuh-you okay?" he asks.

Pennywise nods. "Billy collapsed," it says.

Bill blinks. He nods and shifts, cuddling closer. "Wuh-why?" he asks. "I-it f-fuh-felt like B-Bev s-s—suh-tabbed me."

*(This is why.)*

Pennywise's voice rings in his mind and his ears as loudly as if it had opened its mouth to talk. The link between them is wide open, hiding nothing, and Bill can feel his mind slotting into the jagged edges of Pennywise's psyche. It's so simple to do now; far easier than it had been in the beginning. He's felt it getting easier all this time and never put much thought into what side effects there might be besides his increasing blood-thirst. He presses forward, sliding into Pennywise's mind to see what it knows; it's overwhelming as it always is, the shift between perceptions. Pennywise sees and smells and experiences things so much more powerfully, its memories span

billions of years, and its life is a trail of experiences that are beyond human comprehension.

He travels through its mind past stars and galaxies, through endless universes expanding outwards into the void (*macroverse* ). He watches lesser gods tie their lives to even lesser beings: the messenger to his dreamer, storm gods to fair mortals. He watches bonds form, but nothing so strong as the one that anchors them together; that keeps him from losing his mind in the face of Pennywise's inhumanity.

*(They are less so their ties are less. Only the turtle can rival it, but he won't - he won't. Not until he starts to seek destruction.)*

Bill withdraws, blinking rapidly. His head aches again, but a gentle scrape of claws across his scalp soothes the pain. The last images he'd received, those towering pillars again, linger in his thoughts as conversations he didn't know they'd had settle back into place: memories of dreams that left his pillow bloody and music piping in his dreams.

Maturin and Azha- and Pennywise; creation and destruction. If either chooses to take the opposite role, they need help from a lesser being. Him, for example.

He looks up at the star-blue glitter of Pennywise's eyes.

"Wuh-where are thuh-they?" he asks.

...

Beneath the trailer is a tunnel down into the dark. Deep below Derry, it opens up into a cavern; huge spikes of rock forming a crater at its centre, the site of an ancient impact. It's damp and cold - and so dark that Bill has to slip into Pennywise's mind to use its eyes as his own. What he sees is incredible. Scattered around the edges of the cavern, stretching away into the dark, are clusters of pillars - those same ones that have haunted his dreams lately, and his thoughts. They're leaning together, secured in place with anchor-lines of thick silk. He walks towards the nearest grouping, entranced; he can feel Pennywise at his back, watching his every move. It will kill him if he

hurts them, bond or not, but Bill can't even imagine causing them harm.

He lifts a hand and presses it to one soft, leathery shell. He reaches out with his mind and senses the jumbled instincts of the creature forming within. His child, one of hundreds.

"Wuh-when wuh-ill they huh-hatch?" he asks.

"When they're ready to."

Pennywise doesn't know any more than he does, the experience being new to it as well. Bill swallows, looking up at the towering egg, beyond it to the multitude of its siblings. His children. *Their* children. Each and every one of them carefully positioned and secured. There's a lump in his throat and a stinging in his eyes that he struggles to swallow around. Words are jammed in his mouth, stuck there unable to emerge.

*(They'll devour worlds. They'll slip between universes like shadows and feast on the turtle's careless creations. Our children will be beautiful, Billy. A new race of gods.)*

Yes.

He lets his hand fall and takes a step back into Pennywise's embrace. He twists to look up at it, at the blue of its eyes and the deadlights dancing in its pupils. He tilts his head back, parting his lips and leaning up. Pennywise meets him halfway, kissing him hungrily; his acceptance of their eggs - their *parenthood* - has pleased it. Its hands curl around his hips, claws catching on his T-shirt. He can taste blood on its lips and he opens his mouth wider, kisses deeper, chases after it. He moans as Pennywise's tongue curls around his own, and his fingers curl into fists as he's pulled up and in against his lover's body.

He's hard in his jeans. He pushes himself against Pennywise's thigh, groans at the friction. Its claws slide lower, dipping into the back of his pants, scratching gently over sensitive skin. He gasps into it, and that's all it takes for Pennywise to lift him off his feet and carry him back across the cavern to the ring of raised stone at its centre. He's lowered down onto the cold, hard earth, and Pennywise straddles his

hips to keep him there, its hands dropping to the fastenings of his jeans.

Bill pushes himself up, tugs at the mouldering costume that Pennywise wears only for the fabric to dissolve away to nothing. He reaches for Pennywise instead: his fingers skim over pale chitin, slip down between its thighs to the opening there. It's wet: the tongue-like appendage unfurls as he strokes along it, winds down around his fingers and his wrist. Borrowing Pennywise's eyesight, he can see it: void-black and glistening. He rubs it between his thumb and forefinger and feels a jolt of pleasure that isn't his own. Pennywise's hips jerk, and it leans down over him and pushes him back onto the ground. It kisses him hard and Bill grins into it. He keeps rubbing.

Pennywise growls against him, shoving his jeans down over his hips and thighs. It's less careful with his underwear; that is shredded off his body in seconds, releasing his cock to the cold air. Bill gasps. He moans again as the tendril wrapped around his wrist slides away to wind around his prick instead. It ripples around him before pulling him deep inside Pennywise as his lover lowers itself onto his lap. Bill groans, reaches for Pennywise's hips with fingers still dripping with ichor. Black fluid smears over pale chitin where he grasps at it; he starts to thrust in time with the rippling movements of Pennywise's body. It leans down to kiss him again, wet and filthy, nipping at his lips with sharp teeth and growling as it draws blood.

Pennywise shudders as Bill comes into it, hissing strange words low under its breath as it milks him through his climax. He doesn't understand it, but he knows the meaning - can feel it reverberating through their bond. He strokes up Pennywise's side, presses kisses to every part of it he can reach.

Looking over its shoulder, he doesn't see the cavern. He sees the vast darkness of space-beyond-space, lit with distant universes. The deadlights dance and whirl and spindly legs weave gentle webs for their eggs from gas and atoms. He can see, he realises, the true expanse of Pennywise's true form, and besides a faint ringing in his ears, he feels no pain from it. There's no blood dripping from his ears or nose, no sensation of his mind fracturing. It's just light and void and piping music.

It's beautiful. Beautiful and deadly, like stars exploding. A living event horizon. A goddess of destruction - mad and violent and lovely - bound to him as deeply as possible.

*(I told Billy he was mine. Mine for always and for ever, through time and space and death.)*

*Humans don't live forever.*

*(You're dead already, Billy. Everything that lives has already breathed its last. The years of your mortal existence are a petty construct. You know that.)*

He does know that. He knows because Pennywise's idea of pillow-talk stays into metaphysics and philosophy too often, and his lover has *opinions* about linear time that don't quite mesh with human experience. He knows because he's seen enough of Pennywise's existence to know that his lover is everywhere simultaneously, not just in Derry; that it exists beyond the boundaries of the known universe (and finds the idea that humanity knows anything about the universe laughable) and that it is in every other universe that has ever come into being.

It slides out of his arms, walking across the chamber on long, bare feet. He twists to watch it as it crosses the cavern towards a bare patch of wall; its body folds outward as it moves, two legs becoming eight, becoming hundreds; shifting and twisting until it's wearing the monstrous spider-like form he's only ever glimpsed before. Eyes blink open, glittering like stars, watching him back. He waggles his fingers at it before raising them to his lips and flicking his tongue out to taste the remnants of ichor still clinging to his skin. It's as sweet as cotton candy, but with a sickly aftertaste that clings like mould to his palate.

He sucks a finger into his mouth, humming idly. Across the room, Pennywise busies itself with bringing another cluster of eggs into the world. It's nothing like watching birth on a nature documentary or in that weird 'wonders of the body' thing that Mr Kellsworth made them

watch in gym class last year. For a start, Pennywise isn't in pain: Bill would be able to feel it if it was. It seems completely painless, actually, as Pennywise opens up the mass of its abdomen and uses spindly legs to draw out egg after egg, winding primordial silk around each one.

Bill pushes himself up, kicks away his jeans and the tattered remains of his underwear, and walks closer. He winds his way through a labyrinth of legs, running his hands over sharp spines. The deadlights flicker and gleam, brighter than he's ever seen them, and he stands leaning against one of Pennywise's legs to watch as another egg is retrieved.

(Behind the dancing glow, he can see more of them. Row after row still yet to be fertilised; they stretch back into a body that spans dimensions.)

He keeps watching, silent, until Pennywise is done. It shifts back into its favoured form - still naked - and winds long arms around his shoulders.

"Wuh-wuh-ill the tuh-turtle t-t-try to-huh. To kill thuh-them?" he asks.

"Yes," Pennywise says, and it comes out as a snarl, its eyes flickering red with hate the way they always do when the turtle is mentioned. "You too, if he gets the chance."

"Yuh-you wuh-won't let it," he says.

It's faith: just as he knows that Pennywise will kill his father for hitting him, he knows that it will kill its brother if the turtle attempts to do the same. It's trust and love and soft, warm things that he never thought he'd know this way; that he knows Pennywise wasn't expecting either.

He stretches out a hand to run his fingertips along a silken strand of stardust, and he grins, turning away to press his face into where Pennywise's sternum should be. The cold is starting to get to him, sinking down to his bones, but there's a buoyant feeling behind his ribs that's making him smile uncontrollably. He shivers and presses

closer for comfort, even though he knows Pennywise doesn't generate body heat, and he giggles softly.

"I love you," he says again. "And thuh-them."

Pennywise makes a soft, familiar noise low in its throat and its clawed fingers through his hair.

"Keeping you, Billy," it says.

"Fuh-for-forever," he promises.

If there's a way to keep it, he'll find it. Even if it means leaving this world behind forever.

...

*Sharon Denbrough opens her son's door. Bill is lying still in his bed, breathing slow and deep in his sleep. There's a smile on his face and what looks like ink caught under his fingernails and in the corners of his mouth. He's been writing again, she thinks, and she glances towards the typewriter at his desk. There aren't any new pages that she can see, but it's not out of character for him to hide things. Especially now.*

*She doesn't see the star-blue glow of alien eyes in the corner by his wardrobe, daring her to come closer.*

*Down the hall, Georgie isn't quite as restless. He tosses and turns and mutters in his sleep. Some kind of nightmare, she thinks, and she smooths his hair away from his sweaty forehead.*

"Not Billy," he whimpers, still sleeping. "No. No, not. Not Billy. I won't."

*She presses a kiss to his brow. "Bill's just fine," she says. "I promise."*

*But there's a strange foreboding that slides like a knife between her ribs that has her crossing the hall again. Bill has shifted slightly in his sleep, his ink-stained hand is pressed to his mouth and she can hear the wet sucking noise from her place by the door. She lingers, uncomfortable for a reason she doesn't understand - Bill's asleep, she hasn't caught him doing anything odd - before backing away and closing the door.*



*Her boys are asleep. They're safe. She can wait until the morning to tell them that their father has been arrested.*